

REMARKS

The rejection of claims 4-8 under 35 USC §112, second paragraph, has been obviated by deleting the limitation “and the clutch is rotatably supported by the case at both ends of a spindle” at the end of claims 4 and 5, and further by revising claim 5 to recite that the spool rotates around an axis, and that the lock bar “engages the spool so as to transmit the rotation of the ratchet in said one direction to the spool around said axis...” Claim 4 has further been amended to specify that, after the lock bar engages the spool, that it transmits the rotation of the rotating body in the direction in which the webbing is taken up to the spool “in response to an input from the motor...,” thereby clarifying the operation of the invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

The rejection of the claims under 35 USC §102(b) and 103 has been obviated by revising claim 4 to more clearly distinguish the invention from the prior art of record. Specifically, claim 4 has been amended to recite a webbing retractor which includes a spool on which a webbing for restraining a vehicle occupant is retracted so as to be taken up and pulled out, a motor, and a clutch which is mechanically interposed between the motor and the spool for transmitting rotation of the motor to the spool so as to rotate the spool in the direction in which the webbing is taken up and disconnecting the transmission of the rotation generated at the spool so as to inhibit the rotation to be transmitted to the rotor, wherein the clutch comprises: a case; a rotating body provided coaxially with the spool, the rotating body rotating when rotation of the motor is transmitted thereto; a slider which is held on the case through frictional force and thus can move relatively to the rotating body in a predetermined distance; and

a lock bar, normally urged by direct contact with a spring in a direction in which it engages the spool and held in a disengaged position with the spool by the slider, when the rotating body is rotated in the direction in which the webbing is taken up, the lock bar moving apart from the slider so as to be released from the held state, engaging the spool by the urging force, transmitting the rotation of the rotating body in the direction in which the webbing is taken up to the spool in response to an input from the motor, the lock bar permitting relative rotation between the spool and the rotating body in the direction in which the webbing is taken up, when the rotating body is rotated in a direction in which the webbing is pulled out, the lock bar moving toward the slider and is moved to the disengaged position and held there by the slider,...

None of the references of record either discloses or suggests the webbing retractor defined in amended claim 1. In the last Office Action, the Examiner equated the recited lock bar to the pawls 130 disclosed in Figures 6 and 7 of the Mori '008 patent publication. However, the pawls 130 are moved into and out of engagement with the teeth 122 of the adapter 112 solely by the pushing pieces 154 and pushing portions 166, as set forth in paragraphs [0138] and [0140]. While there are coil springs 158 provided at the sides of the pressing pieces 154 (as further described in paragraph [0117]), they **do not contact** the pawls 130. Instead, their function is to **bias the pushing pieces 154** into contact with the connecting pieces 134 of the pawls 130, as set forth in paragraph [0145] below:

[0145] Here, in the present embodiment, as described above, the connecting piece 134 abuts the pushing piece 154 with the distal end 134A of the one pawl 130 abutting the addendum of the external tooth 122. In this state, when the base plate 92 attempts to rotate further in the take-up direction relative to the rotating disc 140, as shown in FIG. 7, the distal end 134A of the pawl 130 pushes the pushing piece 154 and displaces the pushing piece 154 in the take-up direction, against the urging force of the compression coil spring 158. In this way, the base plate 92 rotates in the take-up direction relative to the rotating disc 140.

Accordingly, there is no disclosure or suggestion in the Mori '009 patent publication of the recited lock bar of the invention that is urged in a direction of engagement with a spool “by direct contact with a spring.” This is an important distinction, as the direct contact of the lock bar of the invention with a spring allows the claimed lock bar to **instantaneously** move the lock bar into an engagement position with the spool. By contrast, in order for the pawls 130 of the Mori '008 patent publication to move into engagement with the teeth 122 of the adapter 120, a braking piece 80 must move as a result of frictional engagement with a friction ring 170 to move the pushing piece 154 against an inclined surface 164 of the pawls 130, which is an **inherently slower** operation. Accordingly, amended claim 4 is patentable over the Mori '008 patent.

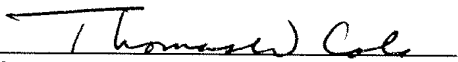
Claim 5 has been amended to include all of the aforementioned limitations of amended claim 4, and is therefore patentable for all of the reasons given with respect to claim 4.

The balance of the claims 6, 7, and 8 are each patentable at least by reason of their dependence from either claim 4 or claim 5.

Now that all of the claims are believed to be allowable, the prompt issuance of a Notice of Allowability is hereby earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: June 22, 2009


Thomas W. Cole
Registration No. 28,290

Customer No. 25570

Roberts Mlotkowski Safran & Cole, P.C.
P.O. Box 10064
McLean, VA 22102
Telephone: (703) 677-3001